

THE TORRANCE HERALD HOME AND GARDEN



The Nurseryman's Viewpoint

By DICK OEHLMAN

We all agree that there is no substitute for grass. The patch of meadow we so faithfully tend does something for us and for our garden.

This article is written to help you build—and keep a successful lawn. Once your lawn is a going concern, it will not let you neglect it. It may sag or settle, it will develop spots or brown patches, it may attract pests, it will certainly sprout such as these are easy to take care of.

Lawns may be sown any time of the year in our area, but experts say that fall is the best time to sow in seed because of the milder climatic conditions here. If you give your lawn proper care by taking careful steps in soil preparation, the correct amount of fertilizing, mulching and a rigid watering schedule, this will guarantee you as neat a perfect lawn as can be planted. Too many amateurs believe that by turning the soil, by leveling and seeding they will get a good lawn. This is the same as building a house without a foundation. Soil preparation is as important or even more so than the type of seed you plant.

A Quick Rule for Preparing Lawn

1. **TILL SOIL**—Break up and pulverize the soil with a spade or power tiller to an even depth of from 6 to 9 inches. Remove rocks and debris that are found on the surface. Pull or dig up all perennial weeds, and hoe off annual weeds. Do not turn them under, as it takes several months for them to decay. If you are adding topsoil to a considerable depth over a hard subsoil, grade this subsoil so it will drain off excess water.

2. **CONDITION SOIL**—With the compacting adobe soil that many of us have to deal with, you may overcome this by mixing gypsum, peat moss and steer manure to the cultivated depth.

3. **LEVEL TO GRADE**—A lawn seeded should be as smooth and level as possible. However, it should have a slight pitch, even in flatland gardens. Figure on a fall of 6 to 12 inches in 100 feet so that water can run off once the root has reached its saturation point.

4. **ROLL SOIL AND CHECK LEVEL**—To firm the seeded, go over the matted surface in two directions with a full roller. If the heavy rolling should develop some low spots, fill them in with another raking and roll again.

5. **BROADCASTING SEED**—To get the seed on uniformly, divide the amount of seed necessary for your area (per label directions on the seed container) in to four equal portions. You can make four approaches over the seed bed in half by running a string down the middle. Broadcast one quarter portion down one half, spreading it evenly and uniformly within each marked area. Then run the string across the middle of the lawn in the opposite direction and scatter the remaining two quarter portions on these two halves. This may be done by hand or with a mechanical seeder.

6. **RAKE LIGHTLY**—This is to insure a thorough contact of seed with seed bed soil. Do this very lightly, by brushing up the seeded surface with a wire rake—use light circular motions.

7. **SCATTER MULCH**—Spreading a seed cover of mulch using peat moss or steer manure is widely used because of the price element and also it will not blow away as readily. This mulch or seed cover should never be rolled in, by rolling it loses its mulch quality.

8. **CAREFUL WATERING**—Do not drag the hose through the seeded area! You need adequate hose to get all the way around your lawn, and a sprinkler head that throws out a thorough but gentle spray.

Keep the peat moss cover dark with moisture until all the grasses are up. This may take up to three weeks if your seed mix includes such slow-growing varieties such as Kentucky blue grass. Don't use a set sprinkler on a lawn seeded.

GARDENER'S CHECKLIST

1. The Calendula or "pot Marigold" is one of the best bedding plants for the dark winter months. The bright yellow or orange flowers open during the coolest weather.
2. The Melanthera Heather is one of the most colorful winter flowering shrubs. Container grown Heathers can be set out at this time.
3. Plant these cool weather vegetables now: onions, cabbage, cauliflower brussel sprouts, beets, carrots, turnips and swiss chard.
4. Cuthbertson and regular Spencer Sweet Pea seed should be planted now.
5. These bedding plants can still be planted: Baby primrose, pansy, snaps, stocks and violas.

Bird of Paradise Adds Distinctive Touch to Garden

Native to the African continent, the Strelitzia or Bird of Paradise grows as a tree-like clumping perennial to 30 feet or an evergreen, trunkless perennial to five feet.

The Strelitzia takes naturally to Southern California climates. These plants will tolerate all day sun. Avoid planting in a draft or against a hot, reflecting wall. If you choose to grow this exotic plant in its smaller form in a container select a deep one, for the plant sends its roots straight down instead of a spreading manner.

The 30 feet Strelitzia is the S. nicotai or Giant Bird of Paradise. Its banana-like leaves are five feet in length, gray-green in color and leathery in texture. The flowers are bird-like—white with a blue tongue. S. reginae is the five-foot form; its leaves are the same color as its tall relative but only 1 1/2 feet long. Its flowers are spectacular—or

ange, blue and white on long stiff stems. They will appear throughout the year—but most often in the cool season—and are very long-lasting in the garden or cut.

Give the Strelitzias a rich, well-fertilized soil with frequent applications of an acid-base fertilizer or iron sulfate. To prepare the soil for planting, screen it and mix in equal parts of peat, leaf mold and sand, adding bone meal and alfalfa leaf meal. Water generously during the growing season. Divide when the clumps fall to bloom; do this in late Winter or early Spring, working the clump out of the hole very carefully since the roots are very brittle.

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Arthur Moore Attends Plumbing Conference

Torrance's chief plumbing and heating inspector, Arthur S. Moore, and Mrs. Moore attended a four-day conference of the Western Plumbing Officials Assn. in San Diego, last week.

Meeting at the U. S. Grant Hotel, about 150 city and county plumbing officials from the 11 western states met to study possible improvements to the Uniform Plumbing Code.

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